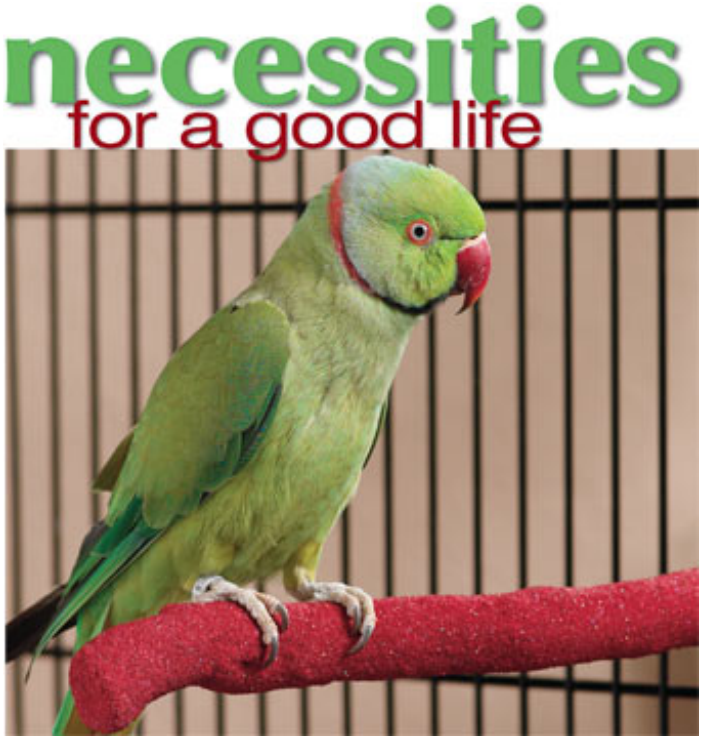
How to Accessorize Your Bird's Cage
for good health & great fun

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Several furnishings are needed for your bird. These include perches, dishes, grooming supplies, nest box, cage cover, and toys. Make sure when the accessories are all in the cage that the bird still has plenty of room to fly and move without colliding with obstacles.

Perches

Birds spend the majority of their time standing on their feet so good perches are essential. A variety of types and sizes should be supplied. Natural tree branches are better than the wooden dowels normally supplied when the cage is purchased. Because of their uneven shape, the bird is not always putting pressure on the same part of the foot when it stands. Most fruit and nut trees are fine to use as are ash, elm, dogwood, and magnolia. Grapevines can also be tried. Cut the branches to fit the cage, scrub and clean them well with detergent, rinse, and dry in the sun. Check for insect egg pods and remove before placing the perch in the cage or the egg pods will hatch in the cage. Untreated cotton rope is great to use for perches. It can be tossed in the washing machine for cleaning. Monitor it closely so the bird does not eat any of the strings or catch a toe in a frayed area. A concrete (mineral) perch gives the bird a spot to groom its beak and nails. Plastic perches are not recommended as they are slippery and can cause medical problems if eaten. Sandpaper should not be used on the perch as it scratches the bird's feet.

Dishes

Dishes need to be appropriately sized for the bird. The food and water dishes need to be easy to remove and clean since this needs to be done on a daily basis. Those made out of stainless steel, crockery, or high-impact plastic are able to withstand the washing and disinfecting necessary to maintain the health of the bird. Water may be given in a dish or in a water bottle such as the type guinea pigs use. Make sure the bird knows how to use the bottle and that it is easy to remove, wash, and refill. Use a bottle brush for cleaning it.

Grooming supplies

Grooming supplies include nail clippers, a sharp pair of scissors, a spray bottle for misting, and a bird bath. An ordinary plant mister and plastic dish for the bird's bath are fine but should not be used for anything else to prevent contamination.

Nest boxes

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Nest boxes should be supplied for a place to hide, for the smaller birds. These boxes can be attached toward the top of the cage and should be easy to remove and clean.

Cage covers

Cage covers are used to signal the bird that it is bedtime and he should be quiet. A cover made to fit the cage can be purchased. An old sheet or pillowcase will also work. The cage cover will provide darkness. The cage should also be in a quiet area at bedtime. A cage cover should not be used as punishment or for extended periods of time outside of sleeping hours.

Toys

Toys should be plentiful and alternated. They are what will occupy the bird through the largest part of the day while the owners are gone. Small birds like small, lightweight toys and tiny mirrors. Larger birds like to manipulate toys with their beak, tongue, and feet. Birds will chew their toys so choose items made from nontoxic wood or hardened plastic. Check the toys daily for damage. Rotating the toys every several days to a week will help keep the bird interested in the toys. A bored bird is at high risk for behavioral and health problems. Finding toys that are favorites will entail trial and error. Try a wide variety as long as they are safe.

Sanitation

All items should be able to be cleaned in hot soapy water or put through the dishwasher set on the hot water cycle. Disinfecting can be done by mixing one-half cup bleach to one gallon of water. Clean and disinfect items away from the bird, rinse thoroughly, and air-dry before returning the item to the bird. Do not use scented cleaners as they can be harmful to the bird's respiratory membranes.

Each species is going to require research on their specific needs for housing, feeding, and socialization. The above is a good starting point toward providing your bird with the necessities for a good life.

We Recommend

Nail Grinder

Trim your bird's nails safely and quickly with this lightweight grinder.

Plywood Nest Boxes

Provide your nesting bird with comfort and privacy at an economical price.

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